

2. Assessment Methodology

Background

- 2.1 This Chapter outlines the method and approach applied by the Consultant Team in undertaking the EIA and preparing this ES.
- 2.2 The approach has been to undertake a systematic assessment of the likely environmental effects of the Proposed Development in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999 as amended (including the 2008 Amendment Regulations) ('the Regulations'); and having regard to advice in DETR and DoE Good Practice Guidance on the Preparation of Environmental Statements.

Scope of the Environmental Statement

- 2.3 This ES has been prepared pursuant to the Regulations and has considered in full the main likely effects of the Proposed Development. It has been prepared in accordance with Schedule 4 of the Regulations, which sets out the necessary information for inclusion in an ES.
- 2.4 Schedule 4 of the Regulations requires an ES to provide:
- a full description of the development including details of the site, proposed land uses, design, size and estimated operational emissions of the proposals;
 - an assessment of the alternatives to the development;
 - a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;
 - a description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment;
 - a description of any mitigating measures envisaged to avoid, reduce or remedy any significant adverse effects;
 - an indication of any difficulties compiling the required information; and
 - a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the above information (the NTS is submitted as Volume 3 of the ES).

- 2.5 The ES has had regard to all aspects of the environment likely to be affected by the Proposed Development. Part 1(3) of Schedule 4 of the Regulations identifies environmental topics to be assessed. These can be grouped into three categories:

Human (eg Population and Land Use)

- 2.6 These environmental considerations are addressed in the ES through the Chapters relating to, Socio-Economic Effects (Chapter 7), Transportation and Accessibility (Chapter 8), Noise and Vibration (Chapter 12), and Air Quality (Chapter 13).

Geological and Ecological (eg Flora, Fauna, Soil, Water and Air)

- 2.7 The potential effects on the natural characteristics of the Application Site are considered in the chapters covering Ecology (Chapter 9), Hydrology and Drainage (Chapter 14), and Ground Conditions (Chapter 15).

Material Assets (eg Architectural, Archaeological and Landscape)

- 2.8 The built, historic and visual aspects of the Application Site's environment are addressed in the chapters covering Landscape and Visual Effects (Chapter 10) and Archaeology (Chapter 11).
- 2.9 The scope of the ES has been discussed and agreed with SMDC. On the 30 September 2009, Turley Associates submitted a formal request for a Scoping Opinion to SMDC under paragraph 10 of the Regulations, including a draft structure for the ES. A copy of this request is attached at **Appendix 2.1**.
- 2.10 A Scoping Opinion was prepared by SMDC and issued on the 27 November 2009. A copy of the report is attached as **Appendix 2.2**.
- 2.11 In formulating this Opinion, responses were received from the following consultees:
- Staffordshire County Council Highways;
 - SMDC Planning Policy;
 - Environment Agency;
 - Countryside Service.
- 2.12 Under separate cover Natural England's response, dated 21 November 2009, was issued to the applicant on the 1 December 2009. A copy of this consultation response is attached as **Appendix 2.3**.

Consultant Team

- 2.13 In preparing the ES, the Applicant has instructed a comprehensive consultant team to provide information and advice on environmental issues. The roles and responsibilities of the consultant team are now summarised.

Turley Associates – Town Planning Consultant

- 2.14 Turley Associates has been responsible for the preparation of the planning application and the supporting Planning and Retail Assessment. Turley Associates has also been responsible for overall coordination of this ES and the sections relating to the Site and Surrounding Area (Chapter 3), Description of Development (Chapter 4), Need for Development and Alternatives (Chapter 5), Planning Policy Context (Chapter 6), Socio-Economic Effects (Chapter 7), Cumulative Effects (Chapter 16), and Summary of Residual Effects (Chapter 17).

Chetwoods Architects – Architect

- 2.15 Chetwoods has been responsible for the design of the Proposed Development and has prepared the plans and Design and Access Statement forming part of the application. Chetwoods has also collaborated with other lead consultants in preparing sections of this ES.

Denis Wilson Partnership/Royal Haskoning – Transport and Environmental Consultant

- 2.16 Denis Wilson Partnership/Royal Haskoning (DWP) has prepared the Transport Assessment to accompany the planning application.
- 2.17 In relation to this ES they have provided sections relating to Transportation and Accessibility (Chapter 8), Noise and Vibration (Chapter 12), Air Quality (Chapter 13), and Hydrology and Drainage (Chapter 14).

Arthur Amos Associates – Ecology, Landscape and Visual Effect, and Archaeology Consultant

- 2.18 Arthur Amos Associates (AAA) has been responsible for preparing sections of the ES on Ecology (Chapter 9), Landscape and Visual Effect (Chapter 10), and Archaeology (Chapter 11).

- 2.19 AAA has also produced the Landscape Design Strategy that forms part of the application.

Pam Brown Associates – Ground Conditions Consultant

- 2.20 Pam Brown Associates has prepared the Ground Conditions ES Chapter (15).

Synergy – Sustainability and Lighting Consultant

- 2.21 Synergy has prepared the Renewal Energy and Efficiency Statement and Lighting Strategy that form part of the planning application.

Baseline Studies

- 2.22 In order to carry out an assessment of the likely environmental effects of the Proposed Development, the existing conditions must first be defined. The likely extent of environmental effects can then be assessed.
- 2.23 As a starting point, this ES adopts the baseline position as being the existing site conditions.
- 2.24 Each chapter of this ES will first set out the baseline conditions of the Application Site and surrounding area and will then address in detail any additional significant environmental effects that are likely to arise from the Proposed Development.
- 2.25 The assessment of additional significant environmental effects has used, where applicable, recognised models or frameworks. The criteria for assessment follow prevailing standards or designations. Where statutory criteria are not available, non-statutory guidance or acknowledged reference points have been adopted. The details of all predictive methods and assessment criteria are given in each Chapter and supporting technical reports, where applicable.

Methodology

- 2.26 The process of EIA, which has led to this ES, has involved the identification of the potential effects of the Proposed Development and then an assessment of the extent and significance of the potential environmental effects. This process is based on consideration of the character, duration, and importance of effects; the environmental sensitivity of the site and surrounding area; and any quantified thresholds or indicative criteria set out in Government regulations and policy

guidelines. Where quantifiable criteria are not available, expert judgement is applied.

- 2.27 The effect criteria used throughout this ES, with the exception of Chapters 9, 10 and 12, are outlined in **Table 2.1**. The criteria used for Chapters 9, 10 and 12 is set out in each individual chapter.

Table 2.1: Criteria for Determining the Significance of the Environmental Effect

Magnitude	Criteria
Substantial Adverse	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a substantial adverse effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.
Moderate Adverse	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a moderate adverse effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.
Minor Adverse	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a minor adverse effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.
Negligible	No observable effect.
Minor Beneficial	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a minor beneficial effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.
Moderate Beneficial	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a moderate beneficial effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.
Substantial Beneficial	The development (either on its own or with other proposals) could have a substantial beneficial effect on the character and integrity of the site and/or the surrounding area.

2.28 The significance of predicted effects has been determined by reference to effect criteria for each assessment topic. Specific criteria for each issue has had regard to the following:

- extent and magnitude of the effect;
- effect duration (short, medium or long term);
- effect nature (direct or indirect, reversible or irreversible);
- whether the effect occurs in isolation, is cumulative or interactive;
- performance against environmental quality standards or other relevant pollution control thresholds;
- sensitivity of the receptor; and
- compatibility with environmental policies.

2.29 For issues where definitive quality standards do not exist, significance has been based on the following:

- Local, district, regional or national scale of value of the resource effected;
- Number of receptors affected;
- Sensitivity of those receptors; and
- Duration of the effect.

2.30 In order to provide a consistent approach to expressing the outcomes of the various studies undertaken as part of the EIA, the following terminology has been used throughout the ES. Effects have been expressed as:

- **Adverse:** Detrimental or negative effects to an environmental resource or receptor;
- **Negligible:** No significant effects to an environmental resource or receptor; and
- **Beneficial:** Advantageous or positive effect to an environmental resource or receptor.

2.31 Where adverse or beneficial effects have been identified these have been assessed against the following scale:

- **Minor:** Slight, very short or highly localised effect of no significant consequence;
- **Moderate:** Limited effect (by extent, duration or magnitude) which may be considered significant; and
- **Substantial:** Considerable effect (by extent, duration or magnitude) of more than local significance or in breach of recognised acceptability, legislation, policy or standards.

2.32 Where the assessment procedure indicates that the Proposed Development is likely to have significant adverse effects, the ES identifies appropriate mitigation measures to reduce, compensate or eliminate these effects and/or take advantage of opportunities for environmental enhancement. Such mitigation measures can either be incorporated into the proposed design and operation of the development, or through the introduction of particular safeguards.

2.33 An assessment of the cumulative effects has been undertaken to understand the effects in isolation and combination with other approved or reasonably foreseeable schemes.

2.34 A summary of the residual effects has been prepared in order to assess the effects of the Proposed Development following completion once mitigation measures have been introduced.

Summary of Key Project Characteristics and Potential Environmental Effects

2.35 In order to set the basis for the assessment, the broad characteristics of the Proposed Development and any sensitivity in terms of the local environment should be identified to determine the areas of greatest potential environmental significance. The latter have been identified through the scoping and consultation exercise.

2.36 A summary of the residual effects (Chapter 17) has been prepared in order to assess the effects of the Proposed Development following completion once mitigation measures have been introduced.

2.37 The key project characteristics are outlined below:

- The provision of new retail, employment, residential and petrol filling station facilities to serve both the immediate and wider populations;

- The creation of an area of public open space and other public realm improvements, including footpaths, to the benefit of residents, users of and visitors to the Application Site/Proposed Development; and
- To enhance the attractiveness and choice of facilities within Leek.

2.38 The issues most likely to be of environmental sensitivity are:

- transport and accessibility;
- ecology;
- landscape and visual effect;
- hydrology and drainage;
- air quality;
- noise and vibration.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2.1

Scoping Opinion to SMDC, Turley Associates, letter dated 30 September 2009

Appendix 2.2

Scoping Opinion, SMDC, letter dated 27 November 2009

Appendix 2.3

Consultation Responses:

- Natural England, letter dated 21 November 2009